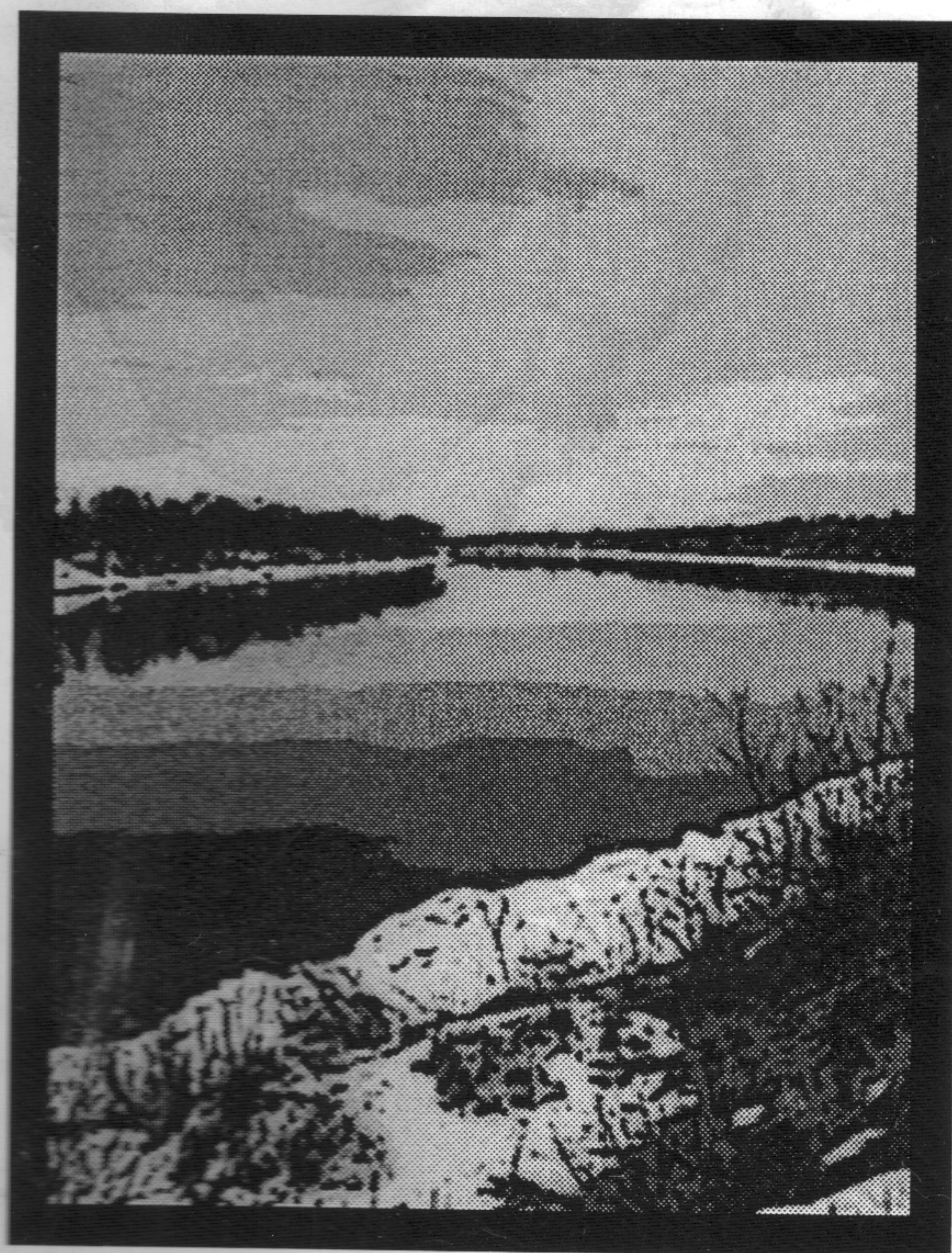


The Rapids Review



Anoka Ramsey Community College
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The Rapids Review
a literary magazine

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A Poet Sees a Painting

— *by* —

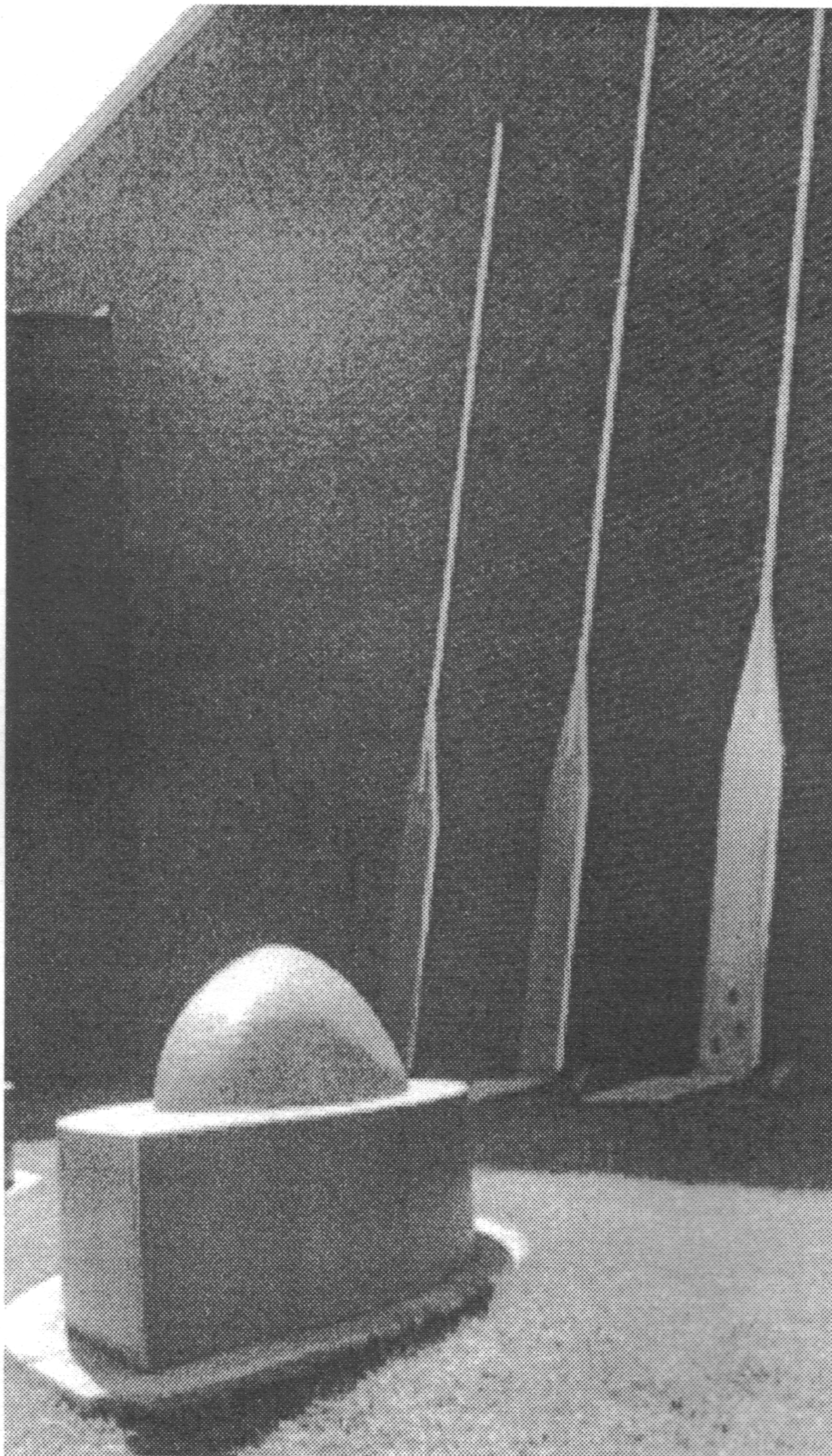
Kristen Bleninger

The white sock coyly illuminates
the corner of the library.
The humble bringer-together of foot and shoe
commands my gaze like a young girl
who does not realize her beauty.

I should ponder the painting's faceless female subject.
I should wonder at the hunching of her massive back.
I should understand the symbolism of the white X's on her blue shirt.
I should know why she reads a book of wordless pages.

But that white sock in the corner
seduces me like cartoon elves and fairies.
It practically giggles as my eyes leave the X's
for later consideration.





Untitled

——— *by* ———
Ryan Grupa

It was a peaceful late afternoon
The sky was a breathtaking blue
Like that of the ocean on a warm summer day
Birds were soaring in graceful motions
As if to signal the changing of seasons.
At the river's edge
A trickle of water ran down the bank
As the last remains of winter vanished from the site
The crisp spring air remained still
As the sun neared the end of its journey to the horizon.
Leaning against the cool brick building
As the sun began to touch the edge of the earth
The gigantic oars glistened in a transparent orange
It was a sight that could spark a mind
To dream of unimaginable things.
In the distance
Three courageous souls
Looked down upon the amazing structure
Like a mother
Looks upon her child.
To them the oars signified
Their untold story of human endurance
All three lost their lives on a small boat
While trying to escape a frozen hell
On the Antarctic Ocean.
As the brave souls looked upon the oars
They became enlightened
And drifted into oblivion
On the last remaining sunbeam

Untitled

— by —

James Autio

It took me nearly twenty minutes to become like the others. Pen in hand, textbooks opened and sprawled across the table, while my eyes, desperate for any distraction, glance up each time the library door swings wide. I stare unabashedly and track the movements of every student crossing that drab and utilitarian carpet, at least until they're finally lost to some quiet corner of their own. Only then do the others and I turn back, reluctantly, to our research papers and memorizations. I should be chipping away at my mountain of Psych terms, but my mind's tracing shadows on the floor.

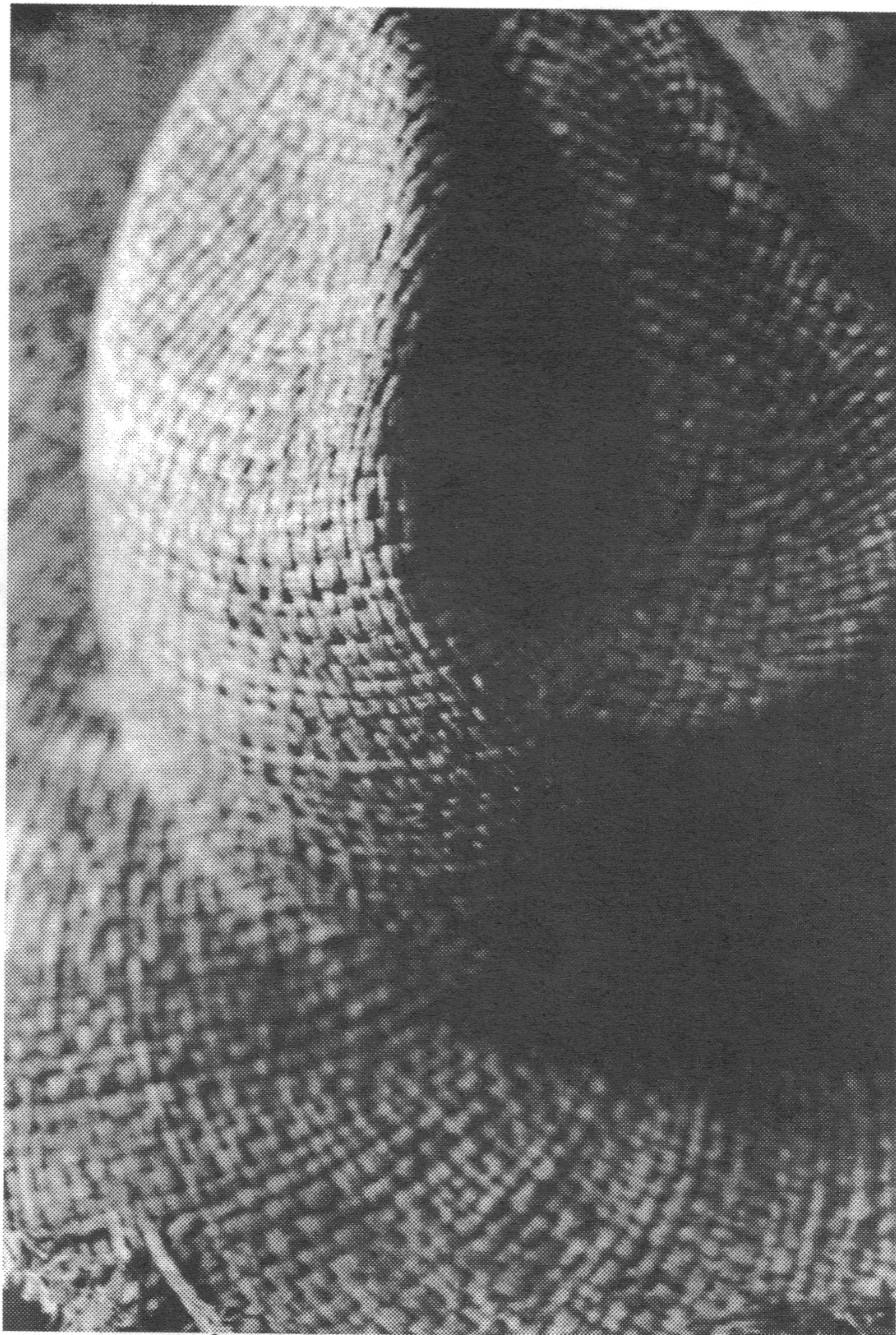
There's this *something* someone called "Walking Shrine" towering over me. The thing could, conceivably, be sauntering legs, though I think it looks, more like a triangular teepee frame. The lodge poles were ripped and bent by years of prairie wind, charred black in some turbulent episode, now forgotten. The buffalo hide covering for the teepee, too, has long since deteriorated, leaving only tattered remains. Snagged within, almost hidden, are torn strips of multi-colored garments once worn by generations of families who no longer need such things as clothing and shelter.

It's strange that the burnt and broken down remains now decorating this library appear to lean away from that bright red fire extinguisher hung on a nearby wall. The "Shrine" looks as though if it could, it would step quickly away.

I recall being singed by events in my own life. Despite the proximity of alternatives I could have used to avoid misfortune, I, too, stepped willingly away from safety, toward the more thrilling future. Living is all about those choices.



Formal Problem



by Carissa Weems

Brother

— by —

Kristen Bleninger

I see what it was in disjointed glimpses—
 First, face down.
 Next, you hung from our arms, as if from a
 crucifix, when we attempted to right you.
 Then, rolling eyes and arching contortions.
 Finally, violent ventilations and vile vomit.

Handcuffs—they put you in handcuffs
 for the slow-motion caravan to the hospital.
 Restraints—they strapped you to the bed
 in the emergency room.

And when they untied you,
 you went fetal, and told me you wanted to
 die.

You don't even remember, do you?

Sister was there
 to confiscate the white rock in your pocket
 and turn it loose in the hospital parking lot.
 Sister went back
 to wipe up the mushroom omelet
 you had eaten for breakfast.
 Sister picked you up
 in the early morning and saw
 the apologies in your eyes.

But in those quiet hours before I
 drove back to the hospital,
 I remembered ancient days of
 snowmobiling, playing on old
 farm equipment, ice-skating...
 I realized that we are no longer those kids,
 are we, Brother?

Tumbleweeds

— *by* —

Anonymous

rolling here, with you
asleep in this jungle
aphrodisiacal flowers, taste them
smelling almost as sweet as your sweat
under your brow, blinking
blinking
“is this wrong?” your eyes want to ask
rightest thing ever.....
taste the grass, do you smell the dew?
do you hear the birds coming just as we come?
stuck up in a bending tree
the wind blows by, our hair moves
there’s juice under there
and juice up above
there’s a clarity down here, in here, in you
you want to drink, but you think you are too thirsty
it’s so right

Oboe

— *by* —

Kristen Bleninger

You there in your blue-velvet crib—
bell, cork, screws, and silver keys...
I wink and sigh at you, as if at a baby.

I make an intangible something
out of coordination of tongue and fingers,
persistent lips, breathing gut, and pulsing throat.

On Top of Europe

— *by* —

Brett Welch

Here I stand, twelve thousand feet up, overlooking the snow-covered peaks of the surrounding mountains. Far below me all the other mountains and clouds lie. Large snowflakes drift up and encircle me. The alien air currents bring rise to the snow filled clouds which lie hundreds of feet below. Sunlight reflects off of the panorama of flawlessly white snow-topped peaks, blinding me with their brilliance even with my sunglasses on. My body hungrily absorbs the warmth the sun provides. At the same time, my lungs and body shudder at the chilling, yet refreshing, cold wind that enters my nose and mouth. My body struggles to adjust itself to this paradox of warm sunlight and chilling air. Free of the smell of car exhaust and the stench of cigarette smoke, I can smell only the refreshing taste of air untouched by humanity. I close my eyes and listen to the sounds around me. Faintly, I can hear the faraway whistle of wind, careening off far distant mountain peaks and valleys. I pause to absorb this moment in this unfamiliar place that I have never experienced before. Here the sounds of crying children, talking people, airplanes flying through the skies, lawnmowers running, and the sound of rush hour traffic do not exist. Perhaps never again will I be able to find the kind of peace that envelops me at this moment.

I hear a voice. I am brought back to reality. It is my friend, Rich, my traveling companion on our first trip through Europe. We are in the Swiss Alps, the place I am now at is called the Jungfrauoch; it is known as the "Top of Europe." The highest train station and restaurant in Europe are located here. We had taken a train to its farthest destination. We then hiked the remaining distance up the mountain through a hollowed out glacier. Our trip was almost at an end. Yet, just an hour ago we were at the restaurant at the Jungfrauoch, eating Bratwurst and drinking Rutenbrau (known as the Lager from Hell), which was ironic considering our location. At the restaurant we shared memories of our trip, even though the trip hadn't ended. Already fond memories were being formed of the places we had traveled, the people we had met, and the things we had seen.

The trip had started ten days before in late April, 2001, when we arrived in Holland from Schiphol airport 20 minutes away by train from Amsterdam. We had arrived on Queen's Day, a huge Dutch holiday. All transportation from Schiphol to Amsterdam was closed down; no trains or taxis were allowed in during this holiday. Instead, we settled for Harlem, a much smaller town located nearby.

Our first ride in Europe was not lacking in excitement. Our taxi driver, a very animated and cheerful person was more than pleased to get us to Harlem quickly. We soon discovered that getting to Harlem quickly meant driving 150 kilometers per hour (approximately 95 mph) through thick holiday traffic and packed side streets. At one point during our trip, our driver managed to

turn and speak excitedly to me about some place we should visit. At the same time, he was waving and yelling out compliments to several partying, half naked, drunk women. He turned his head to the front just in time to see another car in front of us growing frighteningly large in our field of vision. Quickly, he turned the wheel to one side causing Rich and me to tilt at a hard angle. The van narrowly missed the other vehicle and caused the driver in the lane we abruptly entered to slam on their brakes. Any jet lag we had was temporarily forgotten. Having arrived in Harlem, in half the normal driving time, we bid farewell to our driver and found a place to stay for the evening.

As sunset approached, we wandered through Harlem, surrounded by mobs of people swarming through the streets. We wandered from food stand to food stand temporarily transfixed by whatever band was playing on the make-shift stages built on the numerous street corners. We gazed at several immense, modern Ferris Wheels with cartoon figures painted on them standing next to cathedrals that had been erected 500 years before. It was indeed very strange to see such old buildings, since we had come from America where the oldest structures are rarely more than 200 years old. Seeing buildings more than twice that old and twice as extravagant being bombarded with confetti, the tattered remains of state fair-like food containers, and the crushed remains of plastic beer cups seemed sad. These were grand examples of an architectural style and flavor not used for centuries.

The next day we were able to enter Amsterdam. As we walked through the streets, we could see the ruins and piles of refuse. This spoke of a party that must have made what Rich and I had experienced in Harlem small and insignificant.

After a day in Amsterdam, we entered the small town of St. Goar, Germany, a town of 800 people located just off the Rhine River. After the party atmosphere of Holland, we decided to relax a bit, so we took a boat cruise down the Rhine. There we gazed at magnificent fortresses that seemed to grow out of the mountainsides. Each castle seemed to exhibit its own personality, or more likely, the personality of the baron or duke that had built it in the time that he dominated that region.

The next day we decided to explore our first castle. Rheinfels was a castle that could trace its origin back to 1275 C.E. (AD). For the next 350 years that it remained active, many lords would build new additions onto it as a symbol of their greatness. We soon learned the first lesson about castles; they are typically built on steep mountain slopes that are nearly inaccessible. To reach Rheinfels we trudged up the steep, spiraling road that led to the once magnificent castle. The breezes that drifted through the angled mountains kept us cool from the bright, warm, early-May sun. Once at the top, with camera in hand, we began our exploration of this relic.

We meandered through the maze of crumbling walls, our boots crunched on the pebbles and rocks beneath us. Each step caused the sound of the grinding rocks to reverberate throughout the barren structure. The wind provided strange sounds as it whistled through the awkward architectural remains of abandoned walkways and unsteady towers. The sun would many times shoot down abruptly on us from strange angles from above crumbling towers and fallen archways. The radiance of the sun temporarily blinded us. This was a structure that had experienced sieges,

The radiance of the sun temporarily blinded us. This was a structure that had experienced sieges, wars, famines and natural disasters for 700 straight years. Even though it was now, in its old age, a mere shadow of its former self, it seemed to almost dare anyone to try and finish it off.

Then we approached the entrance to the underground catacombs. With a miniature key-chain flashlight that failed mightily in its task, we burrowed deep into the dark, damp, cool, inner recesses of the catacombs of this ancient fortress. The cold, uninviting, narrow, slick walls sucked the incredibly small amount of light that sheepishly emerged from my flashlight. The average height of a person at the time this castle was built was around five feet tall, for the over six-foot frames that Rich and I possessed the environment was claustrophobic. The only sound we heard was the slapping sounds our boots made on the rock beneath our feet. The only other sound was the echoing of our frantic breaths as we traveled up and down steep inclines. As we moved through the dungeon area, I could almost hear the haunting cries of the prisoners that were dumped into this wicked, disease-infested mess. They were fed only a cold, tasteless gruel and forced to perform exhausting physical labor for years on end until their sentences had been met. When we finally emerged from the catacombs and reentered the 21st century we were nearly blinded by the brilliant sunlight.

Rheinfels castle contrasted greatly with the next two castles we explored. Neuschwanstein and Linderhof were built in the 1800's. Here we walked down meticulously maintained halls and courtyards filled with the elegant statuary of Roman and Greek Gods. The walls and ceilings were filled with exotic paintings visually representing the ideas behind the works of Wagner and Mozart. Lush, royal gardens filled with a plethora of plants and flowers surrounded by extravagant fountains of mermaids and cherubic children were a feast for the eyes.

Our next destination was Interlaken, Switzerland. Interlaken, which means "between the lakes," was located deep in the valley of the surrounding Swiss Alps. Our hotel was a nice, family-owned establishment that happened to be one of the tallest buildings in town. It gave us a nice view of the small village below us. It also provided a breathtaking look at the Swiss Alps that now surrounded and dwarfed us. After making the exhausting hike up mountains in Germany to explore the castles, we now sought a more relaxing activity. With that in mind, we spent our first day in Switzerland taking relaxing boat tours through the two lakes that meet at Interlaken. We ate picnic meals we had picked up in a local grocery store, drank wine and ate Swiss chocolate bars. The next day we decided it was time to embark on another journey. We were going to Jungfrauoch, the Top of Europe. We spent several hours taking a series of trains that meandered and struggled up and around the steep mountain passes. Many times on this journey we could hear the train shudder, shake, grind and quake as it inched its way up the steep incline. It seemed like a mountain climber that was continuously struggling with the ever smaller amount of oxygen that was available. It was as if it was gasping out for energy to replenish its lungs. Eventually, however, we did make it up to the top.

Which now puts me at the point at which I began, standing at the highest point in Europe. So much has happened in the last ten days, my mind is in a whirl as I try to comprehend all that I have seen, heard and smelled. The trip is not yet finished, for tomorrow, Rich and I will be entering Paris, France. There we have plans to see Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower, and many more places. This trip to Europe is opening my mind to people and cultures that I have never really understood or

been able to properly appreciate. I can see this trip providing me in the months and years ahead with a unique insight and perspective on world issues and ideas, along with a lifetime of memories and experiences that will be cherished and never forgotten.

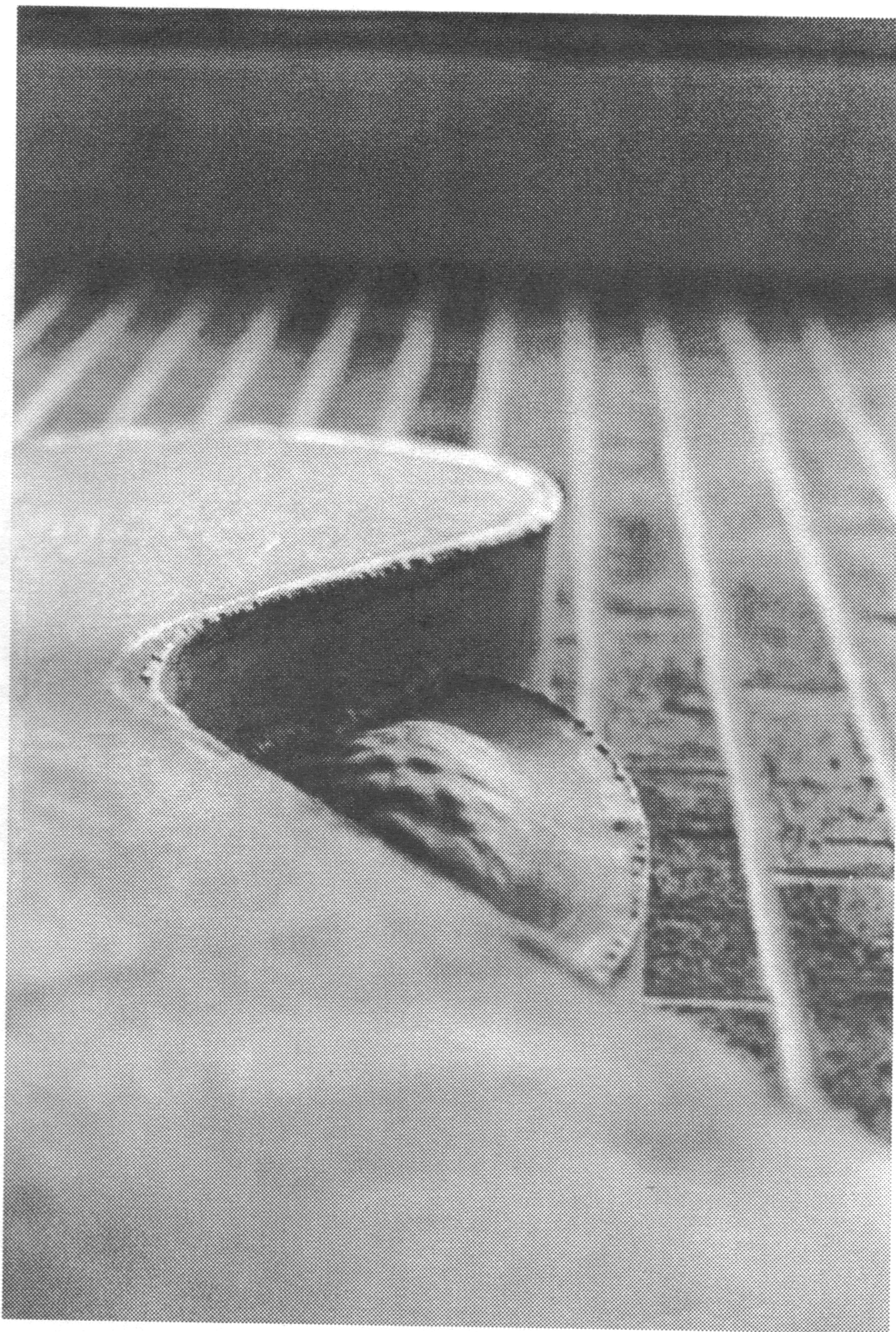
Springtime of a Pseudo-Pretty Boy

— *by* —
Kristen Bleninger

Lashes like strands of silk,
long like spiders' legs—
I kiss them like dew drops
gathered on a sill.

Whiskers like a haystack,
rubbing like a problem—
I smooth them down like children
in storybook beds.

Body like a thick brick,
solid as an anchor—
I grab on like molasses
stirred into a sweet mix.



by Jackie Fritzke

Twilight



Haley Johnson

My Sisters in Afghanistan

— *by* —

Kristen Bleninger

Lawyers.
Doctors.
Professors.
Students.
Workers.
Mothers.
These are my sisters.

My sisters are rotting under sheets.

They squat and beg for moldy crumbs.
They are stripped of their letters, their words.
They are beaten in the streets like rabid dogs.
They are denied even the comforts only sisterhood can give.

Revoked are the vast colors of womanhood.

I saw a sister talking to a secret camera.
Bravely, she lifted her veil to her nose and said,
“I want you to see—this is me; I am speaking.”

But for the most part,
my sisters cower behind blackened windows,
shedding silent tears that fall between the pages
of dusty history books smattered with atrocities
that never should have happened.

We All Live in a Big Purple Bus

— *by* —

Steve Lockwood

Now this purple school bus lies dormant on the edge of a field nestled with young pine trees that have grown up all around it. The back of the bus points toward the road with the license plate still visible. The year on the license plate displays the same year that the bus came to rest here, 1977, the final year of the three summers we lived in it. Those summers of '75, '76, and '77, we lived in this purple school bus and the events that followed, gave me a greater understanding of family and how important it is.

The bus has had better days. As you get closer to the bus, you can see rust starting to form around the body. The windows are all broken out. The tires are flat with the smell of rotting rubber. There is a mattress lying alongside, which is molding and deteriorating, with the springs starting to show through. You need to step over it to get to the door, which is located toward the front of the bus.

The door is still open on the old purple school bus as an invitation to come in and reminisce. While stepping into the bus, the first thing you see is the driver's seat. I remember sitting in this seat one day when the bus was being towed. We had broken down somewhere in Northern Michigan. I would look out the window and see the yellow lines passing by on the road as I pretend to be my father driving. After a while, I got up and sat in the family area.

The family area is where we spend the most time together, which is located behind the driver's seat. The kitchen table has booth-type seats, which face each other. Across the isle is the stove where my mother is cooking hamburgers that have a strong onion smell. The curtain above the stove has singe marks from when she was cooking steak and a grease fire started. After supper we're going to play cards like we always do. We play endless hours of cards and games as we pass many towns; it helps pass the time until we get to where we are going. When I get tired of playing games I will go to my bunk.

The sleeping area is where we go to unwind, relax, or go to sleep. The first top bunk is mine. My younger brother Wayne's bunk is underneath me. Whenever he irritates me, I send spit torpedoes onto his forehead while he's sleeping. He always wakes up screaming at me. I just laugh and go to sleep. In the middle of the night I'm woke up, flying into the air, hitting the ceiling, then fall back to my bed, then to have happen all over again. It was my brother Wayne kicking the bottom of my bunk to pay me back. We both end up laughing and go back to sleep. My sister Debbie's bunk is next to mine on top. My sister has long brown hair, and dresses similar to Janis Joplin. Sometimes in the middle of the night Debbie and I would grab a box of cereal and quietly munch while everyone else is asleep. We would whisper to each other our dreams and try not to giggle so that no one gets

aroused. When done, we would drift back to sleep knowing in the morning we are back to being sister and brother. My youngest brother Melvin's bunk is under my sister Debbie's bunk. My baby sister Taunya sleeps with my parents in the big bed in the back. Her bassinet, which is now used as a pamper hamper, is in the closet where she once slept, but she is too big for it now. The bus is our home away from home when we travel.

We have traveled in this purple school bus for three summers. We look forward to getting out of school and joining my parents, who are already on the road. We travel all over Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin, North Dakota and South Dakota. We have also traveled into Canada. I can't remember all the towns we've been to, but it's many. We would stay at campgrounds and sometimes in parking lots of the places my parents worked.

My parents are musicians for a country western band called Cookie and the Country Gents. My mother's nickname is Cookie. Wayne, Melvin, and I would go watch my parents play sometimes. Before going into an establishment we would always wear our usual clothes. I would always wear an old faded jersey from one of my old teams, blue jeans and tennis shoes. Wayne would wear a cowboy hat; He has worn it since my mother gave him a hair cut that left a bald spot on the top of his head a few years back. He would also wear one my father's silk shirts, blue jeans and cowboy boots. Melvin would wear an old faded baseball cap from one of my old teams, an open flannel shirt unbuttoned with a tee shirt underneath, blue jeans and hand me down cowboy boots from Wayne. We stroll into the establishment like we own the place. We sit up on the bar stool at the bar with a good view of the stage. I would order a lemon sour and a peanut butter and honey sandwich. Wayne would order ginger ale and a liverwurst sandwich. Melvin orders coke and black cherry soda and a bologna sandwich. We would put the meal on my parent's tab and watch them play. My mother was the attraction. She had a beautiful voice. She also is a Dolly Parton look alike. My father is the leader of the band, handsome, as some have said, and a voice like Johnny Cash. Many people know my parents for both talent and looks. After a while these establishments tend to smell like fermented floorboards of beer with smoke so thick your eyes watered. By then it is time to go back to the bus. We would wait in the bus for my parents until they were finished. When they did come, my father would get into the driver's seat and drive to the next town. We would repeat this the whole summer, then it was time to get back to our real home and get ready for school to start.

On the third summer in August, we drove the bus to the cabin up north, which was to be stored for the winter, but it hasn't moved since. As I pass back through the bus now, it is a reminder of what was. All that is left is a skeleton of a home and debris. I walk pass the driver's seat to leave and I reflect back onto what followed that final summer. My parents got a divorce, Debbie moved away, Wayne and I stayed at home with my father and Melvin and Taunya moved away with my mother.

The purple bus was a time period where my relationship with my siblings got closer, a bond that is still strong today. The time period after the purple bus, I learned how fragile a marriage could become and I also learned what profession to stay away from.

Lunchlady

— *by* —

Kristen Bleninger

Lunchlady,
have you resigned your life
to that stool and that cash register
even as the halls bounce
with books and futures?

Lunchlady,
even as the racket of youthful babble
assails your stony ears,
thank you for saying,
“Have a nice day.”

I Know You Are With Me

— *by* —

Nathan Beckman

I go through the darkness
Towards your light
Wondering as I go
Will I forever be in night

Then deep within myself
I know beyond a doubt
You I am never without
With you the darkness is undone

When I need you
I know you are there
When I cry
Your words wipe away the tears

I know you are with me
Through all my trials
So I will stay strong
For your love is with me all the while

Weathered Faces

by

Jon Jellinger

How do they do it
Seeing all they see
Lookin' in their eyes
I don't see me
I wonder if I show
I know what it takes
Deep under my skin
My heart still aches

People I love are takin' me different places
All I'm seein' are new and strange faces
All the pressure is taking it's toll
My appetite for stress is gone and I'm full

A nice good cleansing is what I need
I still gotta love me
Am I full of greed?
Who really cares
I'm livin' my life for me
I'm lookin' through my eyes
And weathered faces are all I see

You know the people who hit the bottle hard
The pain on their faces is so deep that they're scarred
Sure it's a good time once in a while
But after a time, the parties turn mild

I can still do it
Be happy for myself
Pick up my pride and put it on the shelf

It's been hard though
To what others have done
It'd be easier to turn around
And start to run

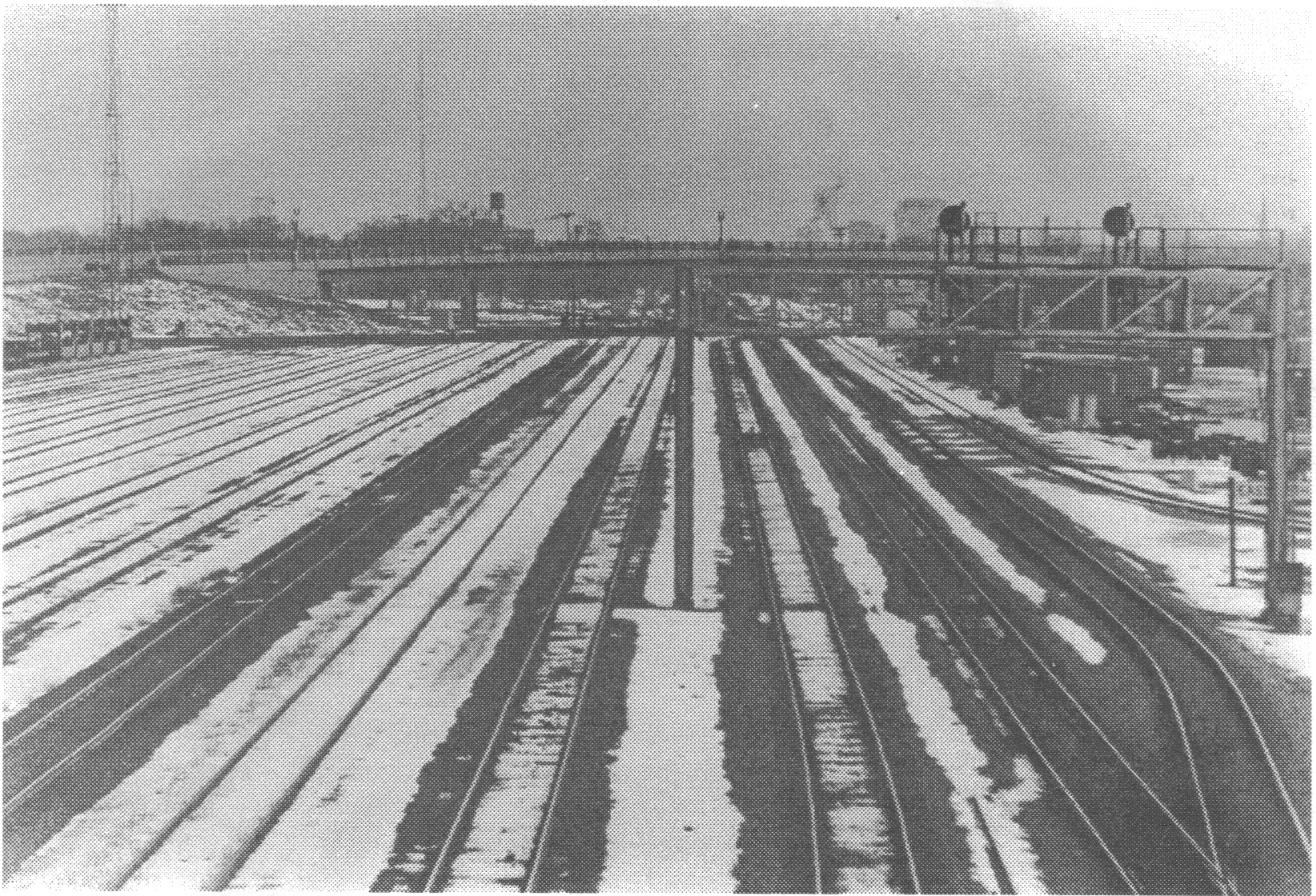
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Frozen

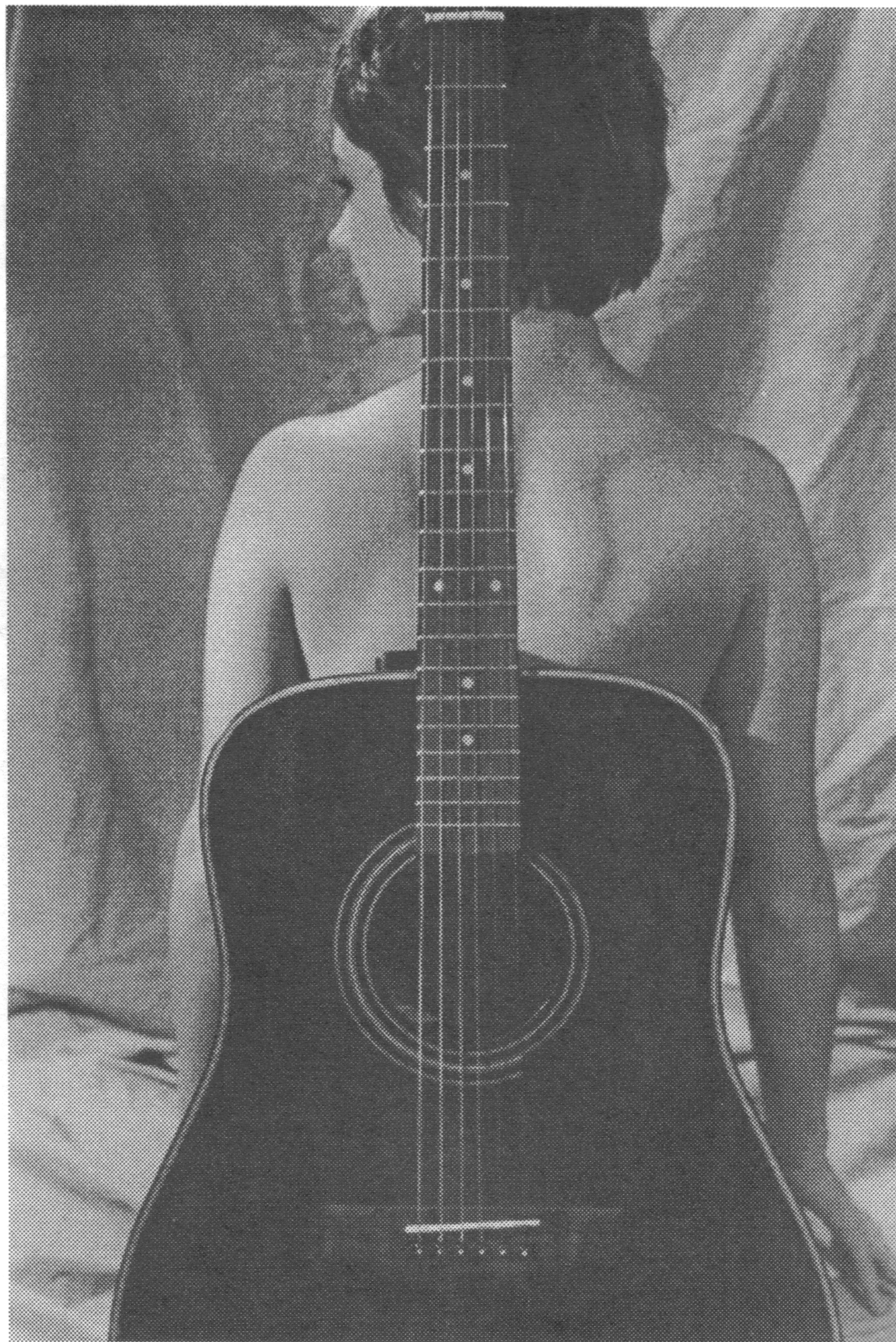
— *by* —

Jeff Wymer

With every movement of my hands
I still feel my fingers caressing her
On the velvet skin of her cheek
And against her crimson hair
With every word I speak
I still feel her moist lips kissing me
Enticing me to stay
A prisoner of their splendor
With every step I take
I still felt our legs intertwining
Holding me fast to her
More than any chain or shackle
With every passing moment
I still feel her arms around me
Their grip ever tightening
Pulling our bodies closer
I feel my heart pounding
Joining perfectly with hers
Surging her sweet purity through me
I still see her eyes gazing into mine
Peering into my very soul
Past my walls of deceit
Like no other has ever been able to
Leaving my heart, mind, body, and soul
Frozen forever in the perfect moment



Bobb Lockwood



by Carissa Weems

Toca Para Las Vacas



by Haley Johnson



by Meghan Derosier

At the Cafe

— *by* —

James D. Autio

It's without thought,
the way the biscotti
slides back and forth
across the elegant little plate,
as the breeze blows
just hard enough
to entice the trees
to whisper her name
as if to me.

The Electric Debacle

— by —

Jon Shadden

My second grade reading class was not easy. Ms. Smitts was a very tough teacher and expected a lot from her students. She was in charge of us “accelerated” students- those who were able to read above the level of a typical second grader. Ms. Smitts liked to set up special assignments designed to push us to our limits. Often these assignments would frustrate more than they would encourage us to excel.

In one such exercise, Ms. Smitts had read an article in an education journal about a group of first graders who had been able to spell an advanced list of words correctly. Naturally, pride dictated that we could never let a group of wet-behind-the-ears, mentally inferior first graders defeat the top second grade reading class of Ash Grove Elementary. As we sat at our semi-circle table, the eight of us gripped our oversized pencils like swords, ready to do battle with our younger unknown opponents. One by one, Ms. Smitts read the words aloud, very slowly, so we could take stabs at the correct spellings of these so-called unspellable words. “Archaic... Elephant... Telephone... Electric... Politic...” Ms. Smitts read slowly from the list in front of her. She continued until the words, ten in all, were scrawled in large letters across the papers in front of us.

“Hand them to me,” she said, pulling the cap off of her trademark red pen. The pen slashed across our papers, leaving big red lines through the center of our misspelled words. She handed our papers back to us without giving the slightest hint of surprise or disappointment and told us we were to correct our mistakes. Upon receiving my paper I was pleased to notice that I had only missed five, whereas my best friend Marc had missed seven. Although I couldn’t defeat a nameless horde of large-brained first graders, I did do relatively well in comparison to the rest of my colleagues. Grabbing a new sheet of paper, I carefully examined my errors and set out to correct them.

Spelling these words correctly was no longer about first graders. It was about competition, between my classmates and I. My second attempt yielded even better results, leaving only two words: *electric* and *elephant*.

My classmates’ progress equaled mine, even surpassed it. Marc was the first to successfully spell all the words correctly. Ms. Smitts dismissed him back to his desk, and my incentive to finish had increased tenfold. It was bad enough that I didn’t finish first, it would be even worse if I didn’t come in second.

Jenny was the next to sit down, followed by Dave. That red pen kept slashing its way across *elephant* and *electric*. My hopes of finishing first, or even second, were completely crushed. Soon I was left alone at the table, face to face with Ms. Smitts and that damned red pen.

Somewhere along the way, I had finally managed to eliminate *elephant*. Only *electric* remained from the initial list of the ten unspellable words.

The hour ended, and Ms. Smitts dismissed the class to return to their homerooms and prepare for recess. I sat alone at the table, waiting for her to return. I imagined that she would tell me how to spell *electric*, and give me a special assignment as penance. Perhaps I would have to spell *electric* fifty times on a piece of paper, or maybe write a research piece on electricity.

As her class trickled back into the room, she sat back down in her original position and inspected my new version of *electric*. The red pen made a return appearance, slashing its way through the word- this time spelled with a few too many K's. By this time her class had lined up at the door, ready for recess.

I am not sure of Ms. Smitts' motives, but she kept her class standing at the door, refusing to dismiss them for recess. No one was going anywhere until I could finally hack out the correct spelling of *electric*. Thirty pairs of angry eyes were glaring at me as I took yet another sheet of paper, repeating many of the errors I had made previously. Each time, the paper returned with a fresh red mark through my latest futile attempt at *electric*. First or last meant very little now, my competition had left the room ten minutes ago. Now, concerns about catching a punch in the stomach from one of the thirty I had inconvenienced filled my head, pushing out any comprehension of the definition of *electric*, let alone the spelling.

I had failed. My final effort returned with the word *electric*, written in big red letters, along with a frowny-face in the corner. Ms. Smitts dismissed her class, and I trailed them out the door. Not a word was exchanged between her and I as I left amongst the grumblings and complaints of her homeroom students, my frowny-faced paper in hand.

Many years have passed since that class, and I retain the memory of this incident very clearly, perhaps fresher in my mind than the countless classes that would follow. I have since learned to spell *electric* flawlessly nearly every time I attempt it, along with the other words found on that list. I am uncertain as to why I was required to sit there until I arrived at the proper spelling of *electric*. Perhaps I shared a bruised ego with a teacher who felt the same sense of failure.

Betrayal is Not an Option

— *by* —

Isaak Chukhvantsev

How would you describe your best friend? Is he/she someone who is not there anymore but has left memorable footprints? The footprints in my memory of my friend may not appear like yours. They might look very different, but they are footprints. Grisha, my best friend, became a shield in God's hands to protect me from getting hurt, and maybe even saving me from a catastrophe. He was actually my sister's friend, but he proved his friendship to be more loyal than some friendships today. He lived with me, experienced things I have experienced (in some sense), and we shared an interest in simple creations. But one day, his faithfulness towards me came to a test.

On a bright morning in December, when fluffy flakes lightly blanketed the frozen ground, my sister and I had to finish some of the annual chores on my dad's farm that was miles and miles away from the city. The farmhouse was built on a flat terrain just up from the road. It was separated from the road by a sparse, oval-shaped island of conifers. On the right side of the house, facing from the road there was a sparsely-populated forest of mixed species of trees. A trail parallel to the curvy boundaries of the forest, led up a sloping hill and out onto a plateau that ended by a wall of trees a mile away. The grassy circles inside the forest, not too deep into the woods, created little harbors. They were the favorite spots where my friend and I spent time, especially if one of the harbors had a pond in it populated with lively crawlers that I could torture. That summer I turned nine, and it was memorable because of our close friendship on the farm.

Parallel to the trail there was a bumpy dirt road about a hundred yards left of the forest. The trail also led up to a huge plateau, on which our young apple orchard and honey clover field was planted. The harvested clover field was closer to the trail almost going into some of those harbors. Our orchard stood out sharply like a little island among short waves of snow glittered clover stalks. Sparsely populated by apple trees, the orchard was no match to cozy woods. Those baby trees needed our protection to grow strong to become something, and that was what we had to do on the beautiful day in December.

My sister was preparing the things we would need to wrap the thin apple tree trunks from hungry rabbits. My dad said that they liked the juicy cores and would chomp them like kids would aggressively chew on ten pieces of bubble gum, and we certainly needed to go up to the orchard and wrap the trees in netting. I thought that the whole process would not take very long, so I decided to wear my sister's short rubber boots. My feet felt a little chill when I slipped into them, but pretty soon I warmed them up by wiggling my toes. We went out from the entryway into a fickle wind that threw pebbles of clustered snow in our direction. I did not bother going back in to put on some warmer clothes for the same reason I wore skinny rubber duck boots. In addition, my

sister's German Shepherd, Grisha, came out of nowhere and started wheedling around my sister like he had never seen her before.

His attitude toward my sister made me feel that he is betraying our friendship. As she was busy getting things together, ignoring her admirer, I hugged him to get his attention. He was about three feet tall on four paws and probably taller than me by a foot standing on his hind two legs. His voluminously soft fur had begun to thicken for winter, and it had a fresh forest scent that made me want to cuddle into his pillow. His love for the forest and our crawlers brought me closer to him. Local villagers sometimes mistook him for a gray wolf. Indeed he looked like one. That made me feel proud of our dog. He was a gentleman, caring for our safety and comfort. My friend, Grisha, walked into my life already named by my dad's friend. I loved his name. Whenever we would call him by this name he would race to us with a joyful smile and wheel around us for a while before letting us pet him. I noticed that he enjoyed it when I called him Grisha.

As soon as my sister was fully prepared for the assignment, we set off. We were climbing the curvy trail. There were both ups and downs; to picture it would be like climbing a backbone of a skeleton laid at a twenty-degree angle. On our way up, I said that I wanted to stop at a small pond that was created by rainwater streaming down the slope into the pit. I had heard that my dad dug it himself for geese to swim in, but Grisha and I had seen some tadpoles in the spring there. We named them Amebas and now I wanted to check them out. They were one of those funny looking crawlers that had a dark gray circle attached to a quickly wiggling tail that resembled a flat mossy hair.

"They are a long time gone," my sister said, dulling my curiosity. "They turned into frogs long time ago and died."

"What an educated young lady," I said to myself, "What nonsense! Those smooth and slimy twisters turned into big ugly frogs, no way!" I did not want to argue. She knew better. Besides, my toes began to bite with cold, and I felt responsible for the important job we were assigned. We moved on.

Unrolling 1/16th-inch wire mesh with my numb fingertips and slitting off a yard length was not the tough part. The challenge was to hold the aluminum netting up above my head around the tree as close as possible to the pegs that we just beaten into rock solid turf. At the same time, my sister attempted to loop one of the strings around a rusty peg. My stretched out arms made me feel like I was holding a long bar loaded with huge iron weights. Our Grisha was nowhere around, and my sister was the only one who would try to motivate me. She told me to hold it little longer, trying to convince me with flattery. Of course, it was easy for her to say; she was a foot and a half taller than I was and eight years older. I attempted to enjoy my surroundings.

My attention shifted to shouts in the forest that made me feel suspicious and uncomfortable but at the same time curious. I suppose my sister heard them too, but she would rather get the job done than waste her time on figuring out the situation. I thought for a moment, *where was Grisha?*

He probably was too busy with my crawlers or got stuck looking at my freezing Amebas. Maybe he was interested in their two bulging eyes on top of their tiny heads? *I don't know.* The thought that Grisha is messing with our Amebas made me feel closer to him, as if we shared a lot in common. I wanted to know where he was.

Suddenly there was a crashing noise coming from the forest. It sounded like a dry tree collapsing and shattering into pieces. More shouts sounded in the forest, and two rapid shots followed, "Bam, Bam!" My sister was quick to point with a trembling hand in the direction of the disturbance.

My eyes were watery from the cold, and I could not make anything out. Either that, or I was too confused. It was a wild pig that broke into our peaceful day. This creature pierced my imagination. Confusion, fear, disorder, horror had grabbed ahold of my serenity. His fierceness threw me into panic. He raced across a spotless blanket. His hoofs, like needles poking the ground, went up and down racing forward. He couldn't have cared less; he was a creature living with my crawlers in the forest. But now he got forced out from his palace to charge us, chase us, and kill us! I was trembling. My hands let go of the heavy netting and dug into the back of my sister's coat. I hid behind my sister's back peeking out to see the action and her response to the situation. It was a big, wild pig with long hair, two tusks and a bloody body. His rage to run had cost him. Long slashes opened up to big flesh wounds. He had tore his chest ripping through the shrubs to get away from the hunters. He jumped like crazy into air. His long, white tusks stood out, and his mouth opened just to let some bloody, foaming bubbles hang off of hairs on his chin, drop to the ground and freeze.

My mind stopped, I trembled, I cried with tears, and I prayed to God, "Lord save me!" There's no escape; I couldn't think of one. A break in our mental turmoil happened when I heard my sister shout, "Grisha get him!"

I felt a shriek from her confident command. Our boy turned into a soldier. His ears were the sharpest I have ever seen, like two triangles set on a helmet. His muscles pumped and rippled in the shoulders as he peeled off to strike the savage leaving a snowy cloud. His tail fanned as if it cooled his muscles; I loved it, and it was Grisha. Two knights were head to head that moment. Who would be stronger willed and more determined to their passions? The pig's will broke, and he limped back into the forest.

My sister used that moment to cry, "Run Isaak, run!"

We ran as fast as our feet could carry us. I lost my rubber shoes as I was running. My frozen feet kept beating on the ground, and I thought they would shatter. I felt the breeze no more, no icy pebbles, nor Amebas intrigued my interest.

It was my Grisha's confidence, his alliance, faithfulness, and loyalty to me. He was the hero, approved by me to get a golden medal for showing his success in battle. He left those puppy paw marks on the snow, and big, firm, loyal footprints in my memory.

Rain & Snow

— *by* —

James D. Autio

1. Rain stains
the red brick
while I pause in the grey dawn.
Your warm bed sighs goodbye
as the security door slams
behind for the last time.
I pull a hand-rolled cigarette
from a dented Sucrets box,
setting it softly,
precariously perched
between quivering lips.

A moment or so later,
I light my smoke in the rain,
hug my leather up around me
and walk away.

2. Snow scurries
around street lamps
and porch lights
in the sleepy little
humdrum village.
Strange, emotional things
may be happening
beyond the pulled shades,
yet the rooftops and tiny streets
refuse to volunteer
any of the ugliness
from under the haze
of plastic snow.

I set your globe on a shelf,
towel-dry my hair.

The Cost

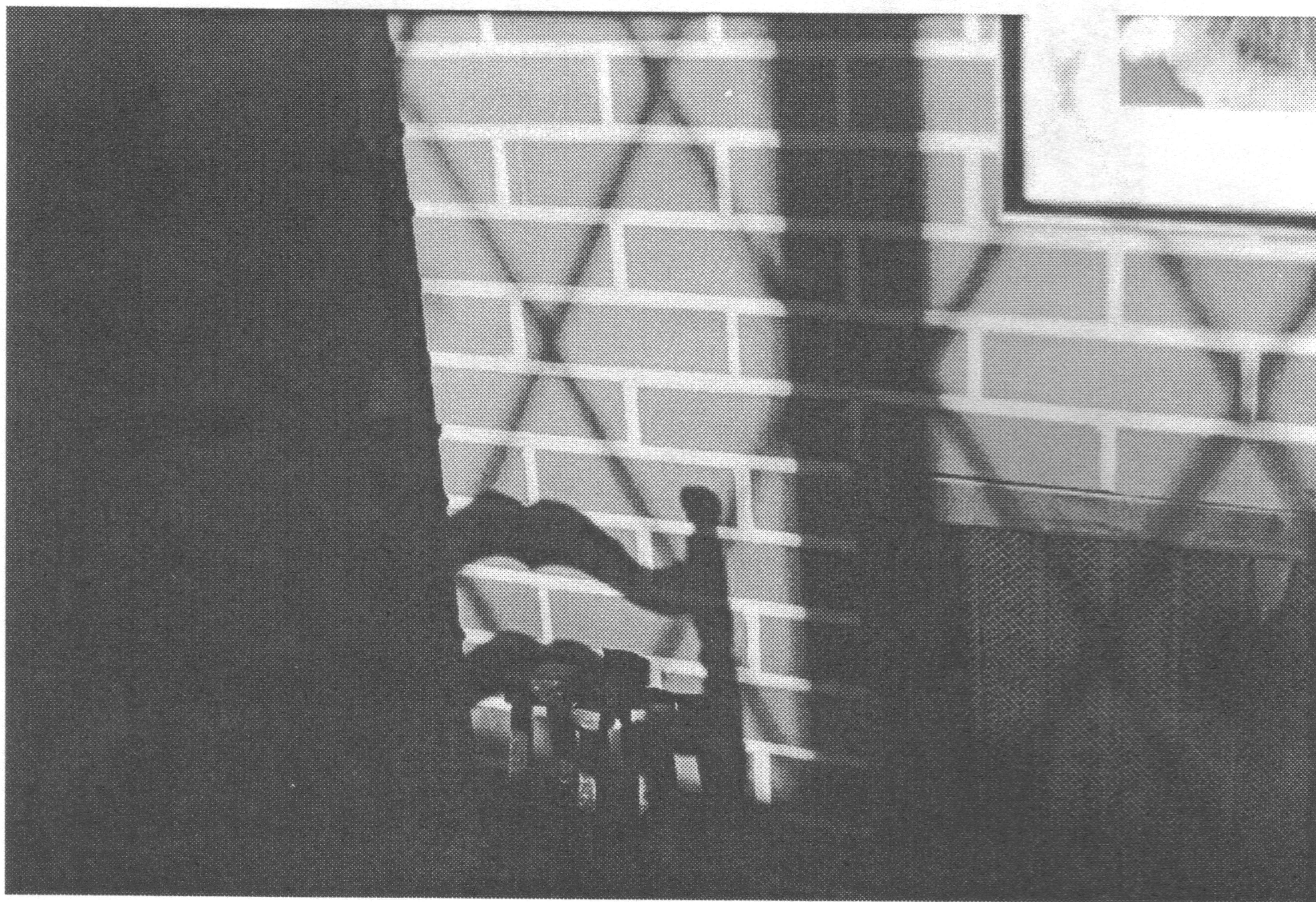
— *by* —

Steve Lockwood

Have you ever viewed a photograph that stirred a self-assessment of your true values? There was a photograph I viewed; it has a black and white exposure. The sky is partly cloudy with tree tops in the background. It looks like a scene of serenity. You can see a rifle with the barrel pushed into the ground and the butt pointed skyward; a WWII helmet is delicately placed on the rifle butt, for this is a marking of a soldier's grave. This soldier came to free a city from Nazi occupation. A person who was thankful he came put a wooden cross with flowers on the soldier's grave and attached a sign that read "Died for France," written in French. If you look close enough you can see and smell the decaying flowers. A picture tells a thousand words, but this photograph has a thousand names, which belong to a husband, a father, a brother, a son, and now a grandfather. There are other photographs more famous in this same era, like the raising of the American flag at Iwo Jima, which stirs American pride, but this picture is a reminder of the cost. Our self assessed true values is a measurement of what is importance to us. the cost If we forget the cost, war becomes too easy of a solution to end social problems.



by Carissa Weems



by Bobb Lockwood

Cabin and Canoe

——— *by* ———
Kristen Bleninger

Cozy man,
after our separate dramas,
our inevitable mishaps and moments of happiness,
will you come back from the southern side of the world
to live the northern cabin and canoe life?

Could we be the earth's children again?
Could we ramble over cliffs and waterfalls,
sucking in every turning leaf and ray?
Could we simmer in a winter afternoon
of ginger chicken noodle soup?
Could the flea markets, the antique shops—
could all the museums of the tiny towns satisfy us?

We could read your favorite books—
the ones you mailed to me before you left.
We could eat cheese and drink wine every day.
We could fill the biggest bucket of agates ever.
We could show each other our words.
We could rub each day from the other's back.
We could nestle under our grandmas' quilts each night
and wake to sausage and eggs each morning.

Well, that's what I'm going to do.

The Hitchhiker

— by —

Brian Gibbens

“Help! You must help me, I’m in grave danger!”

The strange man stared at me through the window with a look of horror on his face. I was just about to leave the gas station when this crazy person came out of nowhere. I’m not used to picking up hitchhikers or anyone for that matter and this man certainly wasn’t an ordinary guy. I was about to tell him to take a hike, but the terrified look in the man’s eyes somehow compelled me to open the car door and let him in.

“Howdy stranger, what seems to be the problem?” I asked. Knowing that this strange man was with me in my car made me feel very uneasy. I tried to talk in a very calm and easy tone of voice to hide my discomfort, but somehow it didn’t really worked.

“Drive! Get me out of here as fast as you can go!” insisted the man.

“Are you in some kind of trouble? Maybe I can help you.” I was trying to say anything to get this man out of my car. The way he clutched at his briefcase as though his life depended on it, made me more nervous than I was before.

The man seemed to hesitate before he spoke. I could tell he was choosing his words very carefully. “I won’t lie to you, I’m being chased. They are after me, and they’ll stop at nothing to get back what I’m carrying.” The man then gave his briefcase a light tap with his index finger.

“Who’s they? Why are they chasing you?”

The man sighed. “Well, I guess you’re involved now too. Hmm, maybe you can help me. If I tell you what’s going on, will you drive me to Springbrook? It’s a small rural town just north of here near the border. I have friends there that could help me.”

I could have left him on the curve right then but I was too nervous. I had already let him in, what would he think if I ditched him now? What if he was armed? I saw my opportunity and agreed immediately to help him. I would bring him to his friends and he would get out of my car.

“It all started six months ago. I work for the government at a research center. The center itself is well known, but the research that goes on in the sub-levels is not. We had been trying to design a device that would allow vehicles to hover. It would save the government billions on road repair, and was being considered for some interesting military applications as well. During the design phase we faced many serious obstacles. At one point it seemed as though we were doomed to fail. Just when we were about to pull the plug, someone from Washington D.C. contacted me and arranged a meeting. It turned out to be the most amazing event of my life, though I’d hardly call it a meeting. My contact never showed up. I went back to my office and found a wooden box on my desk with a note on it, *Hope this helps*. This made me very curious. I opened up the box and was filled with amazement at what was inside. I didn’t know what it was, but I knew instantly that

we hadn't built it. When I say *we*, I mean humans. The small contraption he had given me was far more advanced than anything we'd seen before. The others thought it was from some Washington secret research project much like the one we were in. I alone suspected extraterrestrial origin. When I realized what I had, I tried to find out more about it. I made several attempts to communicate with my Washington contact, Smith I believe was his name, but all my letters came back to me. As far as the government is concerned, Mr. Smith doesn't exist.

I hatched a plan to steal this device. Stealing is probably the wrong word considering that it was *given* to me. I had no intention of keeping the device for myself. I wanted to share it with others. I wanted to benefit mankind, and most of all I wanted to show this device to the media. At last man will have proof of the existence of extraterrestrials."

"Let me guess. Your little scheme didn't work out quite as you planned and now the government is after you. You have that alien gizmo in your brief case right now don't you?"

"I don't know how they knew I had taken it. I kept it out of sight the whole time."

"Did you ever think that maybe that thing you're carrying has a tracking device in it? They're probably following us right now!"

"You're probably quite right but I have no intention of giving up the device. Will you help me?" pleaded the strange man.

I hesitated for a second. If I helped the man and what he said was true, mankind would finally know that they're not alone in the universe. There'd be no more doubt or skepticism. On the other hand, the government was probably following us right now. If I were caught with him who knows what would happen to me? I might never be seen or heard from again. "I'll bring you as far as your friends' place as I agreed, but no farther. I don't want word of this thing coming back to me."

He said I didn't have anything to worry about but as we drove further I started to wonder. It was already dark, and we still had twenty miles to go before we'd reach Springbrook. When I looked back in my rearview mirror I was filled with dread. I saw the man behind me and his face was tense with fear. Behind him there were red flashing lights. The police had found us!

"What seems to be the problem officer?" I stammered as the officer shined her light inside of my car.

"License and registration please," said the officer in a monotone voice. "It says here that you're from Hambury. What are you doing way out here this late at night?"

"Is it against the law to go on vacation?" I lied. It wasn't a good lie, but it was the best I could come up with.

"You sure don't look like you're on vacation to me. You don't have any luggage," said the cop with a sly smirk.

"I got my luggage right here," said the man in the back seat as he held up his brief case.

The officer looked at him and then turned back towards me. "Do you have any idea how fast you were going?"

I breathed a sigh of relief. She wasn't after us for the suitcase, she just wanted to right us a ticket. I told her that I didn't know how fast I was going, but that I was sorry to trouble her.

"Sorry isn't enough this time. I caught you doing 63 and the speed limit here is 50. Was there any reason for the speed?"

"I'm just anxious to get some coffee and a warm bed in Springbrook. I've been driving for eight straight hours." She didn't seem to appreciate my excuse very much as she issued me a ticket. Then she drove off.

The next twenty minutes were very uneventful. I continued to drive while the hitchhiker in the back seat sat quietly with his eyes to the floor. I told him he'd get car sick doing that but he said he didn't want any more people to see his face if he could help it. "If anyone asks, just tell them I'm sleeping," he said.

When we got to Springbrook, he had me bring him to a gas station. He didn't want me to find out where his friends were hiding. He smiled at me with a big grin and then said, "Hold on, I have something for you." His hands went for his suitcase and flicked open the locks. I couldn't believe that I was about to see his alien contraption. The box opened in a flash. It was dark, but all I could see inside was a bunch of crumpled up money and loose change. There was no strange device at all. There weren't even any papers or other things you'd find in a brief case, just money. He handed me a couple of fifties. "For your trouble," he told me.

As I sat there in a daze I wanted to drive off but I didn't. I couldn't. Something was troubling me about the briefcase of his. Why was it full of money, and where was that alien device of his? It then occurred to me that I had absolutely no idea what this thing looked like. Maybe it was invisible, or just very small. Maybe he didn't trust me and actually had it on his person. I decided to park at the edge of a parking lot near some large trees.

I watched the strange man as he walked up to the gas station and went inside. It was hard to make him out through the window but it looked like he was arguing with the cashier. Then he pulled out a gun. He shoved all the money the attendant gave him in his brief case and then bolted out the door. He then ran up to a car that was just leaving the station. "You've got to help me," he hollered, "Someone's trying to kill me!"

Deceptive Cadence

— by —
Anya Klaassen

For it seems that what I saw
was not there
or rather
it was not true
for what you are
and what you seemed to be
to me
are too incongruent
for me to understand
fitting together like a smashed jigsaw puzzle

and now I sit, a child near tears,
trying to force a round peg to fill a square hole.

And when I look upon your face
I don't know
what to see
what to believe
I don't know
if I can trust your eyes
the wolf-eyes that once held
all the sacred promises
I could never believe
anymore

so as I sit among the scattered remains
of what I once held to be true
I can't help but wonder

are you a different person now

or am I?

One of the Many

— by —

Aaron J. Beintema

"Our crystal tears have fallen upon the ashes, but from the dust shall grow a new spirit, to be one in compassion for those who were lost and one in determination to break those who dared to test our resolve..."

-President George W. Bush

The helpless frustration in Jeremy's eyes said it all. "Fifty-four hundred people were lost within just a square mile, yet we couldn't find a single person during our shifts," he lamented, recounting the staggering events of the last six days of his life. "Almost two weeks later I can still taste the diesel fumes in my mouth. The sight of all that twisted metal still flashes across my mind as I close my eyes at night."

Jeremy first heard of the World Trade Center terrorist attack soon after he started his warehouse shift the morning of September eleventh. Being a reserve firefighter and the son of a seventeen-year veteran fireman, Jeremy immediately knew he had to make his way to New York City. "My father told me over three hundred firefighters were lost in the wreckage. If those planes had hit the IDS Tower, that would have been my dad," he explained.

Almost instinctively Jeremy organized a team with four other men. Within forty-eight hours after the attack, they were driving feverishly towards the east coast, spending their own vacation time and risking their lives for people they had never met, in a city they had never visited. Little did Jeremy know he was joining the ranks of the new American hero, born out of the inferno of this horrific event. They drove non-stop, day and night, to get there. Every second was precious, like sand slipping through an hourglass. Life and death were in the balance.

The Big Apple was silent as the team from Minneapolis entered the Holland Tunnel, and neared the Wall Street vicinity. Specialist Lawson greeted all new recruits, gave instruction, and directed the teams to the armory. "Anyone who served at 'ground zero' had to go through the armory," recounted Jeremy. The most popular place to catch one's breath was the makeshift soup kitchen on the nearest street corner. Public servants stood in an unending procession that seemed to reach back across the Hudson River. Though camaraderie was evident, these weary workers appeared to be waiting in line to pay their last respects, rather than to receive a steamy cup of chicken soup. Jeremy recollected, "No one was really talking. They were all very serious about the task at hand."

Every volunteer was required to demonstrate his or her ability to participate in the search and rescue efforts. By showing proper identification, passing a minor mental examination, and giving the name of next of kin, a worker was ready to be briefed and meet with other shift laborers. At a table guarded by two Army reservists armed with automatic weapons, workers exchanged their photo identification for a volunteer badge. "It was strange. It seemed like we were leaving Manhattan for a foreign country," Jeremy remembered. "The silence in the room was deafening. The only sound I heard was a priest in the corner consoling a few of New York's bravest."

In the briefing room the acting fire chief stood in front of a pale green chalkboard that had a rough cross-sectioned map duct taped to its edges. Before and after every shift, the leader would hand out a "goal sheet." This included the duty roster, names and rank of all military personnel, and a single picture of a missing person stapled to the upper right hand corner. "My photo was of a middle-aged woman. There was nothing spectacular looking about her," Jeremy recalled, "but I would have given anything to find that lady and return her to her family."

Corporal Stricklin reviewed the shift assignment, a priest prayed, and Jeremy and his co-laborers took their first steps towards the war zone. The safest route to the work site was through a tunnel, starting at the American Express building and ending at the foot of the former mighty Twin Towers. "God help us," Jeremy whispered under his breath as he walked into the daylight.

Black, oily smoke and pulverized concrete dust hung in the air. His crew formed a search configuration, two deep and shoulder-to-shoulder. With grim determination, they trekked across the smoldering wreckage, stepping on the tops of crushed rescue vehicles and warped iron beams. Suddenly a metallic roar was heard. Volunteers on site for the first time thought the worst, but "return trippers" knew what was approaching. Hovering above the ruins were three helicopters: two supply choppers loaded with provisions and a Tomahawk war ship. The perspiring, exhausted workers gazed into the afternoon sky with arms extended and multi-lingual shouts swelling the gray, ash-filled air. They seemed to gain strength once more, catching the vision afresh of their fellow Americans in need.

About an hour later, Jeremy saw the glimmer of a shiny object as his shovel scraped across the debris. "I thought this was a good sign, hopefully for a rescue and not a recovery," he revealed. The sun shining off the scratched glass beckoned him like the Siren's call. This reflection of hope was the most promising find of the day. Moments later a dog handler arrived, and the bloodhound was convinced he had a scent. Excitement mounted as the search party formed a bucket brigade. "We began digging like men possessed about two feet out from the 'hot spot' in a circular pattern. You can't get right on top of the target just in case there is somebody down there," Jeremy instructed. But the rush of adrenaline dissipated as quickly as it had peaked. All that had been found was a Yankee's cap and a crushed wristwatch.

Jeremy conceded, "At least I did what I felt was right. We may not have found anybody this time, but we helped move more than a few tons of debris. Maybe the next crew can find the man that wore that cap."

The firefighter's creed simply states, "Do not pray for me. Pray for the people I help." It is this humble attitude that makes these men and women heroes. When confronted with the hero label, Jeremy countercharged, "I feel I can speak for just about all the rescue workers when I say we should not be considered heroes. We just have a job to do."

Progress

— *by* —

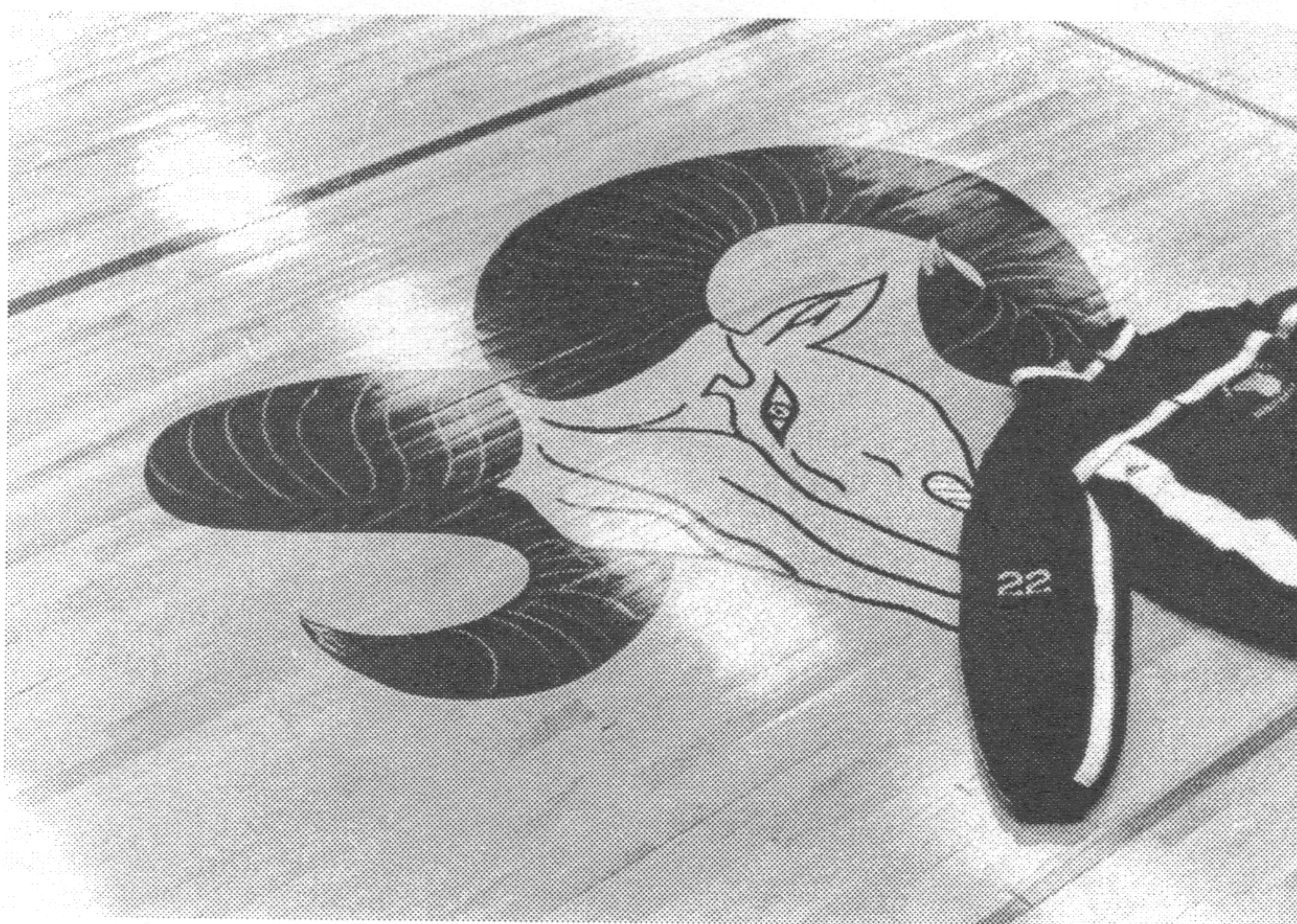
Kurtis Lindgren

Like the Colossus
Your brazen brow set resolutely forward
Raising your fist in triumph
Straddling Mankind and Godhood
Like the harbors of Mandraki

When men look upon you they see
In those glowing eyes, in the proud figure
Dreams of Pride, Power, Prejudice, and Progress
The four horsemen of the apocalypse

Progress, you are a savior with your medicines
But a greater plague with your wars
Progress, don't you know
The ground you stand upon is rotting?
Progress, don't you know
The fire you breathe withers your land
And burns your richest treasures?
You should know
Hubris has a price,
"What you mock will surely overtake you."

Who is it that will carry on
When the floodwaters have washed away your foundation
And plunged you into an endless sea?
And who will carry on
When in the throes of death you destroy your greatest creation,
Destroy your Babylon?



by Cyrus Nimine



By Meghan Derosier

Carpe Diem

— *by* —

James Autio

Me, wondering
how she sees me.

She, standing
in a crisp autumn chill,
barely noticing that
abrasive scratchy-scratchy
of roadside leaves
skittering and collecting
at her feet.

And me, with my
long hair flowing
in the shifting winds,
leaping ditches and dodging
shrubby.

And she, almost
but not quite leaning
against the car for support,
watching as I joyously run
across the field, growing
smaller and smaller
in the distance.

Camp

—— *by* ——

James D. Autio

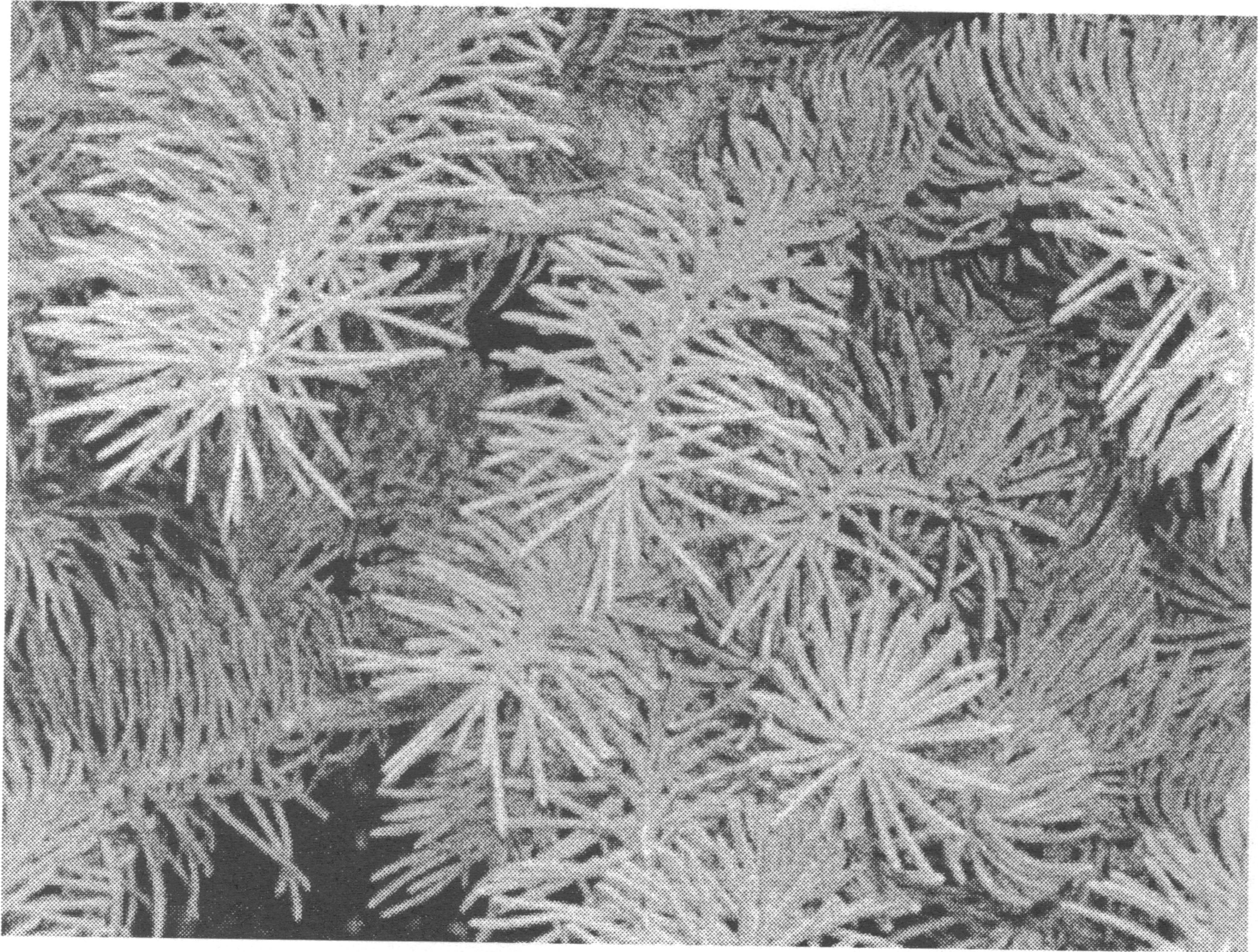
Safe in the black of night,
far from lights and judging eyes,
a soft something kisses my ear.

I pull you close,
my cheek touching yours
on a log before the fire.

A summer evening breeze
lofts a lone hair across
the edge of my face.

I wonder silently
if it's mine or yours,
or just another strand

in the tangled mess of our lives.



by Meghan Derosier

Feeling Light



by Haley Johnson

Chasm

— *by* —

Kristen Bleninger

I dove into the ocean trench,
driven by the heat of our clenched teeth,
beckond by the apathy of a watery winter.

If I am underwater winter ice
and you are a thousand African suns,
what do you suppose would happen
if we met upon the shore...

Now I see you thre-
washed up on the distant shore of my bed,
tangled in bed sheet weeds.

If I am under water winter ice
and you are a lava flow,
what do you suppose would happen
if we met upon the shore...

Now I see you there-
you salty almond eyes resting gently.
You sleep, unaware, beside the trench.

If I am underwater winter ice
and you are a bubbling hot sand,
what do you suppose would happen
if we met upon the shore...

Now I see myself
diving under the reach of the sun
Where ice turns lava to pillows
to be ground beneath the sand.

He who would be King

—— *by* ——

Kurtis Lindgren

In so many words
There's a reason I did it
Time to afford myself
A bit of decency
In a world gone awry

I chose to plunge
Into a self-imposed exile
From the autocracy
Of he who would be king

Departing from
The happy kingdom
Where once we co-existed
And shared in the joys of life

Somehow we forgot
To live together
Your crown turned to iron
And I turned to scorn

The reason for the decay was simple:
"It's the way we do things"
A skewed perspective
To bring happy life crashing down?

We're two strained allies
With warring hearts
Two lost souls
Too blind to see our mistakes

Yet I saw in your eyes
What I felt too
The pain of our separation
And knew it couldn't go on.

Father, you and I,
Perhaps we are too similar
To ever take each other
As who we really are.

Tin Man

—— *by* ——

Anya Klaassen

If you can see it, can hear it,
can taste it,
smell it,
almost reach out and touch it—
Isn't it real?
even if you do fear
that it may only ring
a hollow mocking echo
inside your self-forged cage

Or is it simply the hope, that maybe,
just maybe,
if you set out upon that road
and not fall by the wayside
but somehow manage to find your way—
you might touch it, know it's there,
just know
beyond all doubt
what perhaps
you already knew.

This hope is sometimes all you have—
all you could ever have
at this particular moment.
The world is hard, yes,
and unfair.
But a choice must be made.
Will you reach?
Or will you retreat:
returning to that place behind your rusted armor
your fortress of tin
where nothing can touch, can harm you.

Because maybe the world is right
every once in a while.

Quite possibly
it is only a dream
after all.

But

The choice does not belong
to the world
but to you.

If you will decide.

Reach—

If you are not afraid.

Credits

Tamara Bouley

Doug Darsow

Meghan Derosier

Andrea Karn

Colleen Peterka

Alyssa Rasmusson

Sandy Smith

Adviser: Mark Plenke

